

SASNET

Swedish South Asian Studies Network

Minutes from the Board meeting January 28, 2003, 13.00–17.00

Venue: Conference Room 1, third floor, Department of Sociology, Paradisgatan 5

Members present: Boel Billgren, Birgitta Göranson, Rajni Hatti Kaul, Björn Hettne, Catarina Kinnvall, Bo S Lindblad, Christer Norström, Pamela Gwynne Price och Gunnar Jacks.

Others: Staffan Lindberg and Lars Eklund

Roger Greatrex and **Jan Magnusson** from the Centre for East and Southeast Asian Studies at Lund University were invited to briefly present the New Masters Programme in Asian Studies at Lund University starting in September 2003.

This presentation was made before the meeting started, and created a vivid discussion on several issues, e.g. on the possibility of joint degrees, and the reasons given for why no compulsory language training is included in the programme. Pamela Price informed about a similar Masters programme starting at University of Oslo, where language training will be an integral part.

Agenda:

1. Election of chairperson, secretary and person to verify the minutes

Decision: Björn Hettne will chair the meeting, Lars Eklund will be the secretary, and Catarina Kinnvall will verify the minutes.

2. Agreement on the agenda. Any other business to be added to the agenda?

The agenda was agreed upon after a request by Bo Lindblad was granted, to discuss the balance maintained between South Asian countries in SASNET activities under Point 4.

3. SASNET work report for 2002. Staffan Lindberg, director/co-ordinator

- 1) **Overall report** including a report on the activities and success of some of the Planning Grants given during 2001.
- 2) **Internet gateway**, Lars Eklund. Report on the development of new features regarding contents and technology.

- 3) **SASNET Symposium with PhD candidates, 25- 27 October 2002.** Short evaluation – implications for SASNET’s future work (for a full report, see <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/phdsymp.html>). See also points 4 and 12 below.
- 4) **Other activities** such as the planning of the Masters course at Lund starting in September (see <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/lundmaster.html>), visits, guest lectures, etc. (see <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/lundactiv.html>). A welcome message is that the Board of Humanities and Theology at Lund University now has decided to fully fund a chair professor in Indian Religions from 2003. The position will be announced within short.
- 5) **Funding** for the period 2003 – 2005: per year: 1.65 million from Sida and 0.55 million from Lund University. Sida’s evaluation of the work so far. Enclosure 1: *Sida Promemoria*
- 6) **Balance sheet 2002**, Enclosure 2: *Balance sheet 2002.doc*

Discussion: Staffan Lindberg gave a brief overview of SASNET’s activities during 2002, including the PhD symposium in October, the application for continued funding from Sida, and the intense networking activities. Several members of the board asked questions on why Sida decided to fund SASNET with less money than was applied for. Staffan responded to this by referring to the Promemoria given by Sida/SAREC.

Lars Eklund reported on the further development of the Internet Gateway.

Staffan finally presented the balance sheets for 2002, which shows that SASNET has managed to keep the budget, with a minor surplus.

Decision: The board approved the reports and the balance sheet presented.

4. Priorities in SASNET’s work 2003 – 2005

Suggestion: With the more restrictive basic funding provided by Sida and Lund university and with the evaluation of SASNET in 2004/2005 in mind, it was suggested that the following priorities in SASNET work should be done:

- 1) continue developing the Internet gateway as a research tool for PhD students and researchers and as a source of information to schools, media, government, business and civil society organisations. Use the gateway as a platform for dialogue, consultations and information work. Develop recommended reading with articles of general interest and book reviews
- 2) give all possible support to those who have received planning grants from SASNET
- 3) support already started courses at undergraduate and masters levels
- 4) take initiative to new courses at undergraduate, masters and PhD level wherever feasible

- 5) support existing PhD students in various ways and try to stimulate the recruitment of new PhD students
- 6) try to promote new types of research projects and programmes relevant to South Asia
- 7) plan the 18th Conference on Modern South Asian studies to be arranged by SASNET and Lund University in July 2004

More concretely following up the Marstrand PhD Symposium,:

- 1) A suggestion that special seminars (half day) should be organised with supervisors, PhD- and CD-students at Uppsala, Stockholm, Göteborg-Karlstad, and Lund. Students from other universities & colleges can join in. The seminars will deal with financing of studies and travelling, supervision and course work, sources of information, advise on publishing, networking in South Asia and globally, and preparing for life after the PhD degree.
- 2) **Publishing?** Should we try to start a SASNET Working paper series on Internet (e.g. divided into Humanities – Social Sciences and Natural Sciences?)? Financing of editor? Screening via peer reviews?
- 3) **Ombudsman?** One demand put forward by the PhD candidates at Marstrand was that SASNET root node personnel should serve as ‘ombudsman’ for the students. We suggest SASNET should be seen as complementary to the ordinary channel of the ‘doktorandombudsman’ at the universities. It is equally important that SASNET also represents teachers and researchers in their relation to the universities and research councils when there is a need for such a representation.
- 4) **E-chat?** Is it time to develop a discussion forum for SASNET on Internet? (Not particularly prioritised in the survey we made before the setting up of the Internet Gateway.)

As for other activities, if there is time, we should follow the plan laid out in our application to Sida in April 2002: see <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/sidaapp02.html#plans>

Discussion: Staffan presented the suggestions along with some comments. Regarding Publishing he mentioned the difficulties connected to it, and guessed that it might be too early at this stage to venture into such business, but asked Lars Eklund to continue exploring the possibilities.

Christer Norström asked why a demand raised at the Marstrand symposium that SASNET should initiate a separate web page for PhD students was not mentioned among the suggestions. He also questioned the hesitant approach towards establishing a chat forum. Pamela Price referred to the possibility of using the already existing Nofsa-Net for this purpose, and Lars Eklund was asked to explore this further in collaboration with Ram Gupta of Nofsa-Net. Staffan Lindberg made a proposal that a sub-list for doctoral students could be opened.

Bo Lindblad took up the issue of the balance or imbalance in focus between the different countries of South Asia, arguing that more efforts should be made to include Pakistan and Afghanistan in SASNET’s activities and on the Internet Gateway. He also questioned why the

originally planned contact journey by Staffan Lindberg and Lars Eklund to visit Pakistan and Afghanistan in 2003 had been cut out from the budget. The cancellation might send out wrong signals. Staffan answered that this was due to economic considerations and nothing else –the budget had to be cut because of less funding than expected from Sida and Lund University, and stressed the determination of SASNET to work with and for all the countries of South Asia in an equal manner. He also promised that a contact journey to Pakistan and Afghanistan will be made when the budget permits and the security situation can be guaranteed. Boel Billgren advised that contacts should be taken with the Swedish Foreign Ministry and the Swedish Institute to find out the possibilities to make such a journey.

Staffan finally told the board about possibilities for SASNET to increase its interaction with the business community. He informed about a meeting of Indian business people in Stockholm he attended in October, 2002, and about a coming Asia business forum (focussed on India) at the Swedish Foreign Office on 12 February, 2003, in which he will also take part.

Decisions: The board approved the suggestions on Priorities, and decided that Lars Eklund should explore the points taken up during the discussion. The board also agreed with Bo Lindblad in his wish for a balanced treatment of the South Asian countries and that Staffan and Lars should go to Pakistan and Afghanistan as soon as possible.

5. Budget for 2003

Suggestion: See Enclosure 3: **Budget 2003**.

Total amount available to spend 2003: **SEK 2 300 000**

Priority should be given to the planning grants and to the maintenance of the root node.

Root node: SEK 1 336 208

It is suggested that the root node is managed by the webmaster/secretary working full time and by the director-coordinator working 33 % of full time. (In addition he will devote one month to plan the 18th European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, Lund, Sweden, 6–9 July 2004. Money for this and for one assistant is applied for separately). Their travel budget will be kept at a minimum but should make it possible to travel and network within Sweden and Western Europe. The journey to Pakistan and Afghanistan, which was decided last year, will thereby be cancelled. The budget for the rest of the activities at the root node will be kept at a bare minimum (gateway, material, and guest lectures). A small grant will go to support the new masters course in modern South Asian Studies, which will start 1 September 2003 at Lund.

Planning grants: the remaining amount should be used for planning grants, that is, **SEK 963 792**. This gives about SEK 480 000 to be distributed twice a year. Applicants should also be encouraged to seek planning grants directly from Sida, whose budget on this account is not fully utilised at present. See our website for announcing this:

<http://www.sasnet.lu.se/grantsinvite.html>

Discussion: The board noticed that the balance sheet for 2002 showed a minor surplus on a little more than 30 000 SEK. A suggestion was raised that this money should be used for a contact journey to Pakistan and Afghanistan. Catarina Kinnvall wondered whether SASNET is willing to fund also other Masters courses than the Asian studies programme planned at Lund University. Staffan Lindberg answered that it is possible for anyone to apply for SASNET planning grants for this.

Decision: The board approved the budget, with the addition that the surplus from 2002 should be used for a contact journey to Pakistan and Afghanistan.

6. Distribution of Planning Grants, Spring 2003

Suggestion: The reference group, consisting of Pamela Price, Neil Webster and Malin Åkerblom, had met the same morning and its decisions concerning the 19 applications were presented at the meeting.

Decision: The board thanked the reference group for its work, and approved its decisions, as follows:

I. Research Planning Grants

– **Ahmad, Alia**, Department of Economics, Lund University: “Community Management of Openwater Inland Fisheries – A comparative study of cases from Bangladesh and India.”

The committee decided to fund her project with SEK 75 000.

– **Karlsson, Pia**, Institute of International Education, Stockholm University. "Education in Afghanistan." The committee decided to fund her project with SEK 23 000.

– **Holm, Magnus**, Department of Molecular Biology, Göteborg University. "Analysis of light regulated gene expression in *Arabidopsis thaliana*."

The committee decided to fund his project with SEK 75 000.

– **Djurfeldt, Göran**, Department of Sociology, Lund University. "Agricultural development and social mobility in two agrarian ecotypes in Tamil Nadu."

The committee decided to fund his project with SEK 75 000.

– **Norström, Christer**, Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University: “Livelihood strategies among forest-related tribal groups of South India.”

The committee decided to fund his project with SEK 108 000.

– **Burghoorn, Wil**, Centre for Asian Studies, Göteborg University. "International Conference on Women and Politics in Asia."

The committee decided to fund her project with SEK 20 000.

– **Singh, Nandita**, Department of Land and Water Resources Management, Kungl Tekniska Högskolan, Stockholm. "Problems and Prospects of Sustainable Water Resources Management in India: An Insight from Gender Perspective."

The committee decided to fund her project with SEK 30 000.

II. Education Planning Grant

– **Hatti, Neelambar**, Department of Economic History, Lund University. "Networking for a Masters Program in South Asian Studies."

The committee decided to fund his project with SEK 30 000.

7. Decision about the reference group for the evaluations of the applications 2003

Suggestion: Pamela Price is going for fieldwork to India during the period July 2003 – January 2004. She has suggested that she could be replaced by Prof. Knut Jacobsen, Dept. of History of Religions, University of Bergen. His CV is attached in Enclosure 5: **Jacobsen CV**.

Neil Webster and Malin Åkerblom will remain in the reference group. Remuneration is 5000 SEK per person, which is more or less an honorary fee (like in most Swedish Research Councils' reference groups).

Decision: The board decided to appoint Neil Webster, Malin Åkerblom, and Knut Jacobsen to form the reference group during 2003.

8. Reference group of South Asian Researchers

According to the Directions, SASNET will establish association with a reference group of South Asian researchers, with whom the root node and the board will consult about SASNET's aims and activities. The reference group will function as an advisory and evaluative body and should have at least five but not more than ten members. The communication between the members of the reference group and SASNET should primarily take place through modern communication technology.

Suggestion: We suggest the following persons:

Pakistan: **Prof. Zulfiqar Bhutta**, Dept. of Paediatrics, Agha Khan University, Karachi (who is well known to the Board after the Workshop on global networking in August 2001)

Bangladesh: **Dr. Rita Afsar**, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, Dhaka (who should have come to the Global workshop in 2001 but met with an accident and could not come). Enclosure 6: **Afsar CV**

India: Dr. **Deepak Malik**, from the Faculty of Commerce, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. Enclosure 7: **Malik short CV**

India: Prof. **R. Indira**, Dept. of Sociology, University of Mysore, Mysore. Enclosure 8: **Indira CV**

Sri Lanka: Prof. **Kumudu Wijewardena**, University of Sri Jayewardenepura (SJP), Colombo. Enclosure 9: **Wijewardene CV**

Nepal: Dr. **Bipin Adhikari**, Laws of Nepal, Kathmandu? Enclosure 10: **Adhikary CV**

Discussion: There was a consensus in the board that all the six suggested persons are highly competent and represent a variety of research fields as well as different countries and regions of South Asia. However some more persons could also be invited to be members of this reference group, up to a maximum number of 10. The meeting discussed which research fields and regions these extra four persons should represent, and it was specifically mentioned Technology, Literature, and History.

Decisions: The board decided to appoint Zulfiqar Bhutta, Rita Afsar, Deepak Malik, R Indira, Kumudu Wijewardena, and Bipin Adhikari to form a reference group of South Asian researchers, whom the root node and the board will consult about SASNET's aims and activities. It also decided that suggestions for another four researchers should be made before the next board meeting.

9. Announcing the positions of director/coordinator and webmaster/secretary for the period 2004 - 2006

Suggestion: We suggest the same description for the position of director/coordinator as in the announcement 2001, see Enclosure 11: *Utlysning Director*. Only problem is that there may not be finances for a 50 % position. We suggest a slightly different description for the position of webmaster/secretary. The main change is that the position is announced as full time. See Enclosure 12: *Utlysning Webmaster*. Closing date in both cases: 15 May 2003.

Discussion: The issue of the necessity of announcing the both positions was raised, and after searching the Directions for SASNET the board established that it should be possible to reappoint the present holders of both of the positions without a formal procedure of announcements. In the case of the Webmaster's position the board could decide upon reappointment right away at the meeting. In the case of the Director the board could make a suggestion for reappointment to the University vice-chancellor, who then takes the formal decision.

Lars Eklund had to leave the room while the board discussed his position, and Staffan Lindberg had to leave the room while the board discussed his position.

Decision: The board decided to suspend the announcement procedures.

"In view of the excellent work performed by the present Director and Webmaster" the board decided to reappoint Lars Eklund as SASNET webmaster/programme secretary for the period 2004-05; and suggest the vice-chancellor of Lund University that Staffan Lindberg be reappointed SASNET director/co-ordinator for the period 2004-06.

10. New SASNET board for the period 2004 – 2006: Appointment of an election committee with a majority of members from outside the board

According to the Directions for SASNET: At the time of elections for a new board, the board will appoint an election committee with a majority of members from outside the board. The election committee will put forward candidates to the vice-chancellor.

Suggestion: We suggest that the following persons will constitute the election committee: Assoc. prof. Eva Hellman, Dept. of History of Religions, Uppsala University, Prof. Staffan Lindberg, SASNET, and Assoc. prof. Malin Åkerblom, International Science Programme, Uppsala University.

Decision: The board decided to appoint Eva Hellman, Staffan Lindberg, and Malin Åkerblom to form an election committee.

11. Ideas and principles for the 18th European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, Lund, Sweden, 6–9 July 2004

See <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/EASAS18.htm>

Suggestion: We suggest that the conference will try to get more funding than Heidelberg from various sources and that we sponsor more researchers from South Asia. We suggest that we invite researchers from the natural sciences, technology, and medicine to conduct panels. We also suggest that there should be at least one panel on Poverty in South Asia. Otherwise, new and old panels will be selected on the basis of estimated strength in terms of number of paper writers (closing date is 1 July 2003).

An overall theme has yet to be decided. All suggestions are welcome.

Organising committee: Alia Ahmed, Boel Billgren, Lars Eklund, Sidsel Hansson, Neelambar Hatti, Rajni Hatti Kaul, Therese Hindman Persson, Pernille Gooch, Catarina Kinnvall, Anna Runesson, Staffan Lindberg, and Jan Magnusson. Should there be any members from outside Lund in the committee?

Discussion: Staffan Lindberg said that getting extra funds for the EASAS conference should not be a problem. It is possible to apply for special money for this purpose from a number of funding agencies.

Pamela Price raised the question on how to announce the conference widely, and reach out to researchers in all the fields, including the natural sciences.

Bo Lindblad mentioned problems concerning obtaining Swedish visas for South Asian citizens, and asked for SASNET to assist facilitating this, e.g. by keeping cordial relations with the Swedish embassies in the region.

The issue of plenary and general sessions was discussed. Staffan Lindberg informed that the ambition is to get a star speaker for the opening plenary meeting, if possible from South Asia. Bo Lindblad added that one general session is not enough – there should be at least one such session every day during the conference to keep the community spirit.

Boel Billgren and Pamela Price wondered about the screening process needed, to judge which papers that should be entitled for funding. Staffan Lindberg explained that this will be the responsibility of the person in charge of each panel.

Decision: The board approved the ongoing work, and urged everybody to contribute to the realization of the conference by giving good advises to the organisers.

12. New activities: Where can we apply for more grants for SASNET activities? What kind of activities should we give priority in that case?

Suggestion:

First thing may be to get a **graduate school** started, like the one for East and South East Asia, SSAAPS, see: <http://www.ssaaps.stint.se>

If PADRIGU at Göteborg is selected by NORFA to organise a *Graduate school of Asian studies*, we should work to support this school. If this does not happen we should explore other possibilities: from just organising summer schools in cooperation with other institutions/departments like the Nordic centre (see for this year: <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/researchf.html#summer>) to more ambitious programmes with courses, scholarships, post-docs, etc. Where could we turn for funds?

Second thing may be to get more money for **Planning Grants**. How much priority should be given to this? Sida has, for example, expressed that the current level is acceptable so that only the very best projects/programmes get funding. However, helping people to plan projects is a very open affair and there may be need for encouragement rather than hard screening at an early stage of planning. Where would we turn for more money?

Third thing may be to get more money for **travelling to South Asia**, but who would be interested in paying for that? There is also a time dimension in this. There is not enough overall budget resources for the Director/coordinator to work more than part time – this gives very little time for travelling. Networking in South Asia has to be mainly via the net. In our judgement it is also much more important that researchers/teachers and students travel for specific purposes than general networking tours by the root node.

Discussion: Several members presented ideas on how to get extra grants and increase SASNET's activities. Pamela Price suggested that a graduate school should be initiated to include not only South Asia but also the Middle East and Central Asia. Staffan Lindberg commented that it is important to find the right entrepreneurs in this field before fund raising. Boel Billgren recommended that SASNET should keep contacts with the European Union, and take opportunity of the many International programmes within the education sector, such as Erasmus World, starting in 2004, and the Tempus programme which now includes the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

Decision: The board welcomes initiatives taken to get more funds for SASNET activities. Regarding the issue of travelling to South Asia the board points out that the surplus from 2002 makes it possible for Staffan and Lars to visit South Asia in 2003.

13. Date for the board meeting in August 2003

Decision: The next board meeting will take place on Tuesday 26 August 2003.

14. Any other business (should be announced at the start of the meeting)

No other businesses had been announced.

Lund 6 February 2003

Lars Eklund

Lars Eklund, secretary

Björn Hettne.....

Björn Hettne, chairman

Verified by:

Catarina Kinnvall...

Catarina Kinnvall